

POWER OF THE PWP

WHAT IS A PWP?

The Personal Wellness Profile (PWP) is the health risk appraisal used by the Coast Guard Health Promotion Program. It is used as a measurement of one's current health status. It also serves as an educational tool that makes individuals aware of health habits and lifestyle practices that determine their overall health and well-being. The PWP gives positive reinforcement of good health practices, along with recommendations for changing those that are less healthy. The PWP also places emphasis on the factors individuals can control (diet, exercise) and not on those out of individual control (genetics, duty station).

The PWP is not a substitute for medical examinations, it is an instrument used to measure to what extent individuals are taking responsibility for their health status by making wise lifestyle choices. Individuals complete a 75 question questionnaire and a report is generated by their regional Health Promotion Managers. The report will evaluate health status in seven major areas:

1. Coronary Risk
2. Cancer Risk
3. Nutrition Status
4. Fitness Status
5. Stress Status
6. Substance Use
7. Safety Status

WHEN SHOULD ONE COMPLETE A PWP?

As an evaluation tool, the PWP should be completed each year to assess positive changes in health habits. The PWP is now given to all incoming Cape May recruits and CPO, CWO and DCO students and is available all Coast Guard members in all AOR's nationwide. By completing the PWP yearly one can track if they are actually making changes needed to improve their overall health.

New Coast Guard policy also dictates that all Coast Guard members found to be over their maximum allowable weight (MAW) in accordance with COMDTINST M1020.8E shall complete a PWP.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE BOTHER TO COMPLETE A PWP?

The number one reason everyone should complete a PWP is that most Americans have poor health habits, but are in denial (and I don't mean a river in Egypt). With all of the major health problems in the United States it is easy to see many do not take self-responsibility for their health status. Statistics point out a number of major health problems contributing to chronic disease. Statistically over 60% of Americans are overweight and about 25% still are using tobacco 40 years after the Surgeon General's Report outlined numerous health hazards from its use.

Coast Guard statistics from previous year's PWP data indicate about 55% of those completing the questionnaire are not at a healthy weight. (The PWP does not consider all CG MAWs to be within healthy weight limits.) Coast Guard statistics also indicate about 55% of our CG personnel are not meeting fitness standards considered healthy for their age and gender.

PWP BOTTOM LINE?

The PWP is an excellent device to measure one's health status and should be completed by more Coast Guard personnel. To avoid a really low score one can make some positive changes:

1. Have a regular, vigorous fitness program
2. Have a balanced diet
3. Don't smoke
4. Use alcohol in moderation or not at all
5. Develop skills to lower your stress level
6. Maintain a healthy weight and % body fat
7. Get adequate sleep
8. Eat a healthy breakfast and avoid frequent, unhealthy snacks

UNIT OF THE MONTH

The unit of the month for November is Pacific Area Tactical Law Enforcement Team (PACTACLET) of San Diego. A very proactive health promotion program was established under the previous leadership of Commanding Officer CDR Pat DeQuattro and Unit Health Promotion Coordinator (UHPC) LT Jason Brand. This active program is being carried on by the new administration headed by CDR Mark Ogle with the assistance of his Training Officer Jack Martincavage and a cadre of UHPC's. PACTACLET has instituted a mandatory fitness program with workouts three mornings a week. They do regular fitness testing and have established a point system to distinguish high achievers. Looking beyond just fitness, the unit has established a regular schedule for completing the PWP and encourages their teams to complete the questionnaire yearly. As a unit being deployed on a regular basis, they are doing what they can to remain "ready" and looking at the Health Promotion big picture by promoting a broader concept of wellness to include not just physical strength, but mental and emotional stability.

Special thanks to Dr. Bud Clay, Health Promotion Manager at ISC San Pedro, for writing the Health Promotion Bulletin this month.



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